



Putting 'Energy' Back Into America's Commerce

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Energy and Commerce

107th Congress



Billy Tauzin, Chairman

Prepared by the Energy and Commerce Committee Press Office



In 2001, the venerable House Energy and Commerce Committee, under the leadership of Chairman Billy Tauzin (R-LA) and assisted by Vice Chairman Richard Burr (R-NC), has worked hard to advance an ambitious agenda that will benefit the American people for generations to come. In just a few short months, the Committee has held more than 70 hearings on topics of critical importance to the future of our nation and passed landmark legislation dealing with a wide range of issues that have bedeviled Congress for years.

To date, the Committee has addressed the growing energy needs of our nation and its high-octane economy; advanced real HMO reforms that will protect patients and give doctors the tools they need to make necessary medical decisions; passed, for the first time in two decades, meaningful improvements to the beleaguered Superfund program that will help cleanup our environment; and worked to ensure that consumers benefit from vibrant, new high-speed Internet services by approving a bill to facilitate the rapid deployment of broadband technology to all areas of the country.

These are simply a few examples of the House Energy and Commerce Committee’s accomplishments in the first months of the 107th Congress. To get a better idea of the leadership and hard work of the Committee staff and its Members, consider the following:



PUTTING “ENERGY” INTO ENERGY AND COMMERCE

This year, the Committee was renamed the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. So far, the panel has lived up to its new name as energy issues have been at the forefront of an active agenda overseen by Staff Director Dave Marventano.

Since February, the Energy and Air Quality Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX), has held 15 hearings on a variety of timely issues – eight of these hearings specifically addressed the need for a comprehensive national energy policy, a plan America has sorely lacked for nearly a decade.



- **Feb. 15** **Lessons Learned From California’s Electricity Policy**
- **Feb. 28** **Domestic Exploration of Natural Gas**
- **March 6** **Congressional Perspectives on Electricity Markets**
- **March 14** **Clean Coal Technologies**
- **March 20** **Electricity Markets in California**
- **March 22** **Electricity Markets in California**
- **March 27** **Utilizing Nuclear Energy in the New Millennium**
- **March 30** **Crude Oil and Refined Petroleum Products**
- **May 1** **The “Electricity Emergency Relief Act”**
- **May 3** **The “Electricity Emergency Relief Act”**
- **May 15** **Consumer Perspectives on Energy Policy**
- **June 13** **The Bush Administration’s National Energy Policy Report**
- **June 22** **Conservation and Energy Efficiency**
- **June 27** **Hydroelectric Relicensing and Nuclear Energy**
- **July 27** **National Electricity Policy: Barriers to Competitive Generation**

In addition to these hearings, the Committee has played an integral role in crafting and advancing sweeping energy legislation – sponsored by Chairmen Tauzin and Barton, supported by President Bush and passed by the House in early August – that moves America a giant step closer to a comprehensive, long-term energy policy that improves the security, reliability and affordability of our nation’s energy.

H.R. 4, Securing America's Future Energy (SAFE) Act, includes important conservation and environmentally friendly provisions. It was overwhelmingly approved in July by the Energy and Commerce Committee on a bipartisan 55-to-3 vote. Specifically, this landmark energy package:



- ◆ **Reduces light truck fuel consumption by 5 billion gallons over six years.**
- ◆ **Increases funding for programs to assist low-income residents.**
- ◆ **Provides incentives for cleaner energy sources and alternative fueled vehicles.**
- ◆ **Promotes clean coal technologies.**
- ◆ **Increases the supply of gasoline while stabilizing prices.**
- ◆ **Sets stricter standards for energy use in federal buildings.**
- ◆ **Simplifies regulation of nuclear and hydroelectric power.**

The Subcommittee also held several hearings earlier this year on the electricity emergency in California. Two of these hearings focused on innovative proposals to help California and its neighbors in the West cope with an emerging energy crisis. The Subcommittee's leadership on the Western power shortage prompted immediate action from federal and state officials to increase supply and decrease demand for power throughout the region, easing what could have been a disastrous summer for Californians.

IMPROVING HEALTH CARE FOR ALL AMERICANS



For the better part of a decade, Congress has been talking about reforming managed care but efforts to pass meaningful legislation have been tied up by political gridlock. In August, Chairman Tauzin managed the successful floor debate over a Patients' Bill of Rights that will improve the quality of medical care for the nearly 100 million Americans who rely on HMOs for their day-to-day health care needs. Passage of this historic bill was facilitated by a compromise between President Bush and a key Energy and Commerce Committee Member, Rep. Charlie Norwood (R-GA).

Specifically, **H.R. 2563, the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act**, which passed the House and enjoys the support of the White House:

- ◆ **Ensures patient protections will be comprehensive and apply to all Americans.**
- ◆ **Guarantees patients a rapid medical review process for denials of care.**
- ◆ **Gives patients and their doctors the tools to make necessary medical decisions.**
- ◆ **Expands federal remedies to hold health plans accountable.**
- ◆ **Encourages employers to offer health care benefits.**

Led by Health Subcommittee Chairman Michael Bilirakis (R-FL), ***Patient's First: A 21st Century Promise to Ensure Quality and Affordable Health Coverage*** is a series of hearings held by the Health and Oversight and Investigations Subcommittees that have focused on the need for Medicare reforms, prescription drug coverage and contractor reform. Chairman Bilirakis has held a number of hearings on this initiative and various other issues:

- **Feb.15** **Prescription Drug Coverage Hearing**
- **March 1** **Improved Access to New Technologies (medical devices, etc.)**
- **March 15** **A Smarter Health Care Partnership for American Families**
- **March 22** **Assessing How Medical Record Privacy Regulations Can Be Improved**

- April 1 Reforming the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA)
- April 26 HHS Priorities in the FY 2002 Budget
- May 3 Evaluating the Effectiveness of the FDA Modernization Act
- May 10 Former HCFA Administrators Testify on Issues Facing the Agency
- May 16 Second Hearing on Prescription Drug Coverage
- June 13 Consumer Access to, and Demand for, Pharmaceuticals
- June 14 Merging Parts A and B of the Medicare Program
- June 20 Markup of Several Human Cloning Bills
- June 27 Advancing the Health of the American People
- June 28 Medicare Contractor Reform
- July 10 Markup of Legislation Addressing Various Public Health Needs
- July 18 Full Committee Markup of Bills on Various Public Health Needs
- July 26 Examining the President's Framework for Strengthening Medicare
- Aug. 1 Authorizing Safety Net Public Health Programs



PROMOTING INNOVATION AND COMPETITION IN A NEW MILLENNIUM



From pushing regulatory reforms to encouraging the rollout of new, 21st century technologies, the Telecommunications and the Internet Subcommittee, led by Chairman Fred Upton (R-MI), has been working hard to see that Americans reap the benefits from all of the digital economy's innovative and far-reaching possibilities.

Already this year, the Subcommittee has held 10 hearings on a wide variety of issues:

- Feb. 8 Is ICANN's Domain Name Selection Process Thwarting Competition?
- March 8 Technology and Education: Public and Private Sector Programs
- March 15 Digital Television: A Private Sector Perspective on the Transition
- March 29 FCC Chairman Michael Powell: Plans for Reforming the Agency
- April 4 E-Rate and Filtering: The Children's Internet Protection Act
- May 17 Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1765
- June 14 Enhanced 911 Emergency Calling Systems: A Progress Report
- June 20 Campaign Finance Reform's Impact on Broadcasters
- July 20 Industry's Efforts to Curb Children's Exposure to Violent Content
- July 24 U.S. Deployment of 3G Wireless Services

From a telecommunications standpoint, the most far-reaching bill before the Committee thus far has been *H.R. 1542, the Internet Freedom and Broadband Deployment Act of 2001*, a bill sponsored by Chairman Tauzin and Ranking Member John Dingell. Simply put, the legislation creates regulatory parity between telephone companies and cable operators when it comes to the delivery of new high-speed broadband services. Following a spirited debate on April 26, the Telecom Subcommittee marked up and approved the legislation. H.R. 1542 was later approved by the full Committee on May 9 and currently is before the Rules Committee awaiting a House vote.

In other action, spamming – the sending of unwanted electronic mail – was the subject of a Subcommittee markup on March 21. Rep. Heather Wilson authored *H.R. 718, the Unsolicited Commercial Electronic Mail Act of 2001*, and successfully steered the legislation through both the Subcommittee and full Committee. H.R. 718 also awaits a House vote.

Meanwhile, the Subcommittee is closely monitoring:

Digital Television – The transition from analog to digital television is an extraordinarily complex issue and entails revamping each stage of the television viewing experience from the studio to the living room.

Third Generation (3G) Wireless – 3G represents an exciting leap forward for the consumer through the use of wireless handheld devices. There are significant issues the telecom industry and federal government need to work through before spectrum is made available for new 3G services. Chairmen Tauzin and Upton are committed to moving these promising technologies forward.



FCC Reform – On March 29, FCC Chairman Michael Powell appeared before the Subcommittee to outline his vision for reforming the agency. Given the critical nature of telecommunications to the nation’s economy, it is more important than ever that the FCC functions efficiently. FCC reform remains a top priority.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) – The Department of Commerce delegated responsibility for the administration of top-level domain names (TLDs) on the World Wide Web to ICANN. The Committee, which closely scrutinized the TLD selection process in a hearing in February, has urged ICANN to consider selecting a “.kids” domain name to provide a safe harbor for children to access the Internet.

SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON NATIONAL ISSUES



Already this year, the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. James Greenwood (R-PA), has focused national attention on a number of issues that could impact all Americans – bringing to light efforts to clone a human being, examining major tire safety issues, raising questions about the impact of exit polling on national elections, investigating schemes to counterfeit and illegally distribute pharmaceutical drugs and demanding improved security for sensitive and private data contained on federal agency computer networks.

In total, the Subcommittee has held 12 hearings, several of which have led directly to legislation tailored to address issues raised by the panel:

- **March 1** **Ensuring Quality and Affordable Health Coverage (joint hearing)**
- **March 28** **Issues Raised by Human Cloning Research**
- **April 4** **Ensuring Quality and Affordable Health Coverage (joint hearing)**
- **April 5** **The Security of Government Computer Systems**
- **May 10** **Ensuring Quality and Affordable Health Coverage (joint hearing)**
- **May 23** **The Security of Private Medical Information (joint hearing)**
- **May 31** **A Review of Medicare+Choice Plan Payment Methodology**
- **June 7** **Continuing Concerns Over Imported Pharmaceuticals**
- **June 19** **Ford Motor Company’s Recall of Some Firestone Tires (joint hearing)**
- **June 28** **Ensuring Quality and Affordable Health Coverage (joint hearing)**

- **Aug. 3** **The Security of Sensitive Commerce Department Data**
- **Aug. 28** **Oxycontin: Its Use and Abuse**

At a packed hearing in March, the subcommittee focused international media attention on the safety and ethical concerns surrounding efforts to clone a human being. Members of the Subcommittee rallied around the need for a federal law prohibiting human cloning in the United States. As a direct result of this hearing, President Bush announced his support for a ban on human cloning and, on July 31, the House passed The Human Cloning Prohibition Act by a 265-to-162 vote.

In another example of vigilant oversight influencing public policy, a Subcommittee hearing in June that examined the growing problem of counterfeit, misbranded and illegal pharmaceutical drugs entering the U.S. market, helped defeat a controversial proposal in Congress to weaken existing pharmaceutical import controls.

ENSURING CONSUMER PROTECTION

By focusing on tire safety, airline mergers and complicated privacy issues, the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection, chaired by Rep. Cliff Stearns (R-FL), has made consumer protection its No. 1 mission in the new millennium.



After 12 hearings on various issues, the Subcommittee has educated Members on many of the complexities of consumer protection in a rapidly-changing, interconnected world.

- **March 1** **Privacy in the Commercial World**
- **March 8** **The EU Directive: Implications for the U.S. Privacy Debate**
- **March 21** **Airline Mergers and Their Effect on American Consumers**
- **April 3** **Examining Existing Federal Statutes Addressing Information Privacy**
- **May 8** **Opinion Surveys: What Consumers Say About Information Privacy**
- **May 22** **Impediments to Digital Trade**
- **May 23** **Online Fraud and Crime: Are Consumers Safe?**
- **June 19** **Ford Motor Company's Recall of Certain Firestone Tires**
- **June 21** **Information Privacy: Industry Best Practices and Solutions**
- **July 11** **Discrimination in Health Insurance Based on Predictive Genetic Tests**
- **July 26** **How Do Businesses Use Customer Information?**
- **July 31** **Current Issues Before the Financial Accounting Standards Board**

Protecting consumers and their financial information – both online and off – is critically important in today's digital world. This year, the Subcommittee has held half a dozen hearings on privacy issues – educating Members on cyber-crime, global directives and prevailing business practices relating to information-sharing.

Meanwhile, in June – with national media attention spotlighted on tire safety and the collapsing relationship between Ford Motor Company and Firestone – the Subcommittee held a joint hearing to examine the consumer implications of Ford's decision to replace 13 million Firestone tires on its vehicles. As a result of the hearing, the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) called for a formal defects investigation into one of the replacement tires, prompting Ford to pull it from a list of approved replacement tires.

MAINTAINING A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

For too long, proposals to overhaul the much-maligned and painfully-bureaucratic environmental cleanup programs in the United States have fallen victim to political gamesmanship and posturing. In a matter of months, the Environment and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Paul Gillmor (R-OH), accomplished what has eluded Congress for two decades: meaningful reform.



In May, Chairman Gillmor's *Small Business Liability Act (H.R. 1831)*, passed the House by an overwhelming margin. This common-sense proposal makes long-overdue improvements to the beleaguered Superfund program and will facilitate environmental cleanups nationwide:

- ◆ **Frees small businesses from the nightmare of needless Superfund litigation.**
- ◆ **Removes from liability parties that send "plain old garbage" to Superfund sites.**
- ◆ **Ensures that responsible parties are not shielded from liability.**
- ◆ **Focuses the Superfund Program on cleaning up America's toxic waste.**

Chairman Gillmor has made reform a top priority, with a focus on improving Superfund, the Brownfields program and addressing complex solid waste issues.

In the first months of the 107th Congress, the Subcommittee has held a number of important hearings on these sensitive environmental issues:

- **March 7 A Smarter Partnership: Removing Barriers to Brownfields Cleanup**
- **March 28 Drinking Water Needs and Infrastructure**
- **May 16 The Small Business Liability Relief Act (H.R. 1831)**
- **June 28 Legislative Proposals to Reform the Brownfields Program**
- **July 26 Perspectives on Shipments of Municipal Solid Waste**

Already this year, the House Energy and Commerce Committee has a long list of accomplishments that will benefit American families and the American economy. The hard work and leadership of the Committee and its Members has helped to end political gridlock that for years had bottled up progress on critically-important issues.

Yet for all of the achievements, there is a lot more to be done. Reforming the Medicare program, which provides daily health care services to millions of Americans, is one of the most important, as well as one of the most vexing issues facing Congress today.

Building off the Health and Oversight Subcommittees' Medicare reform hearings, the Committee will develop a common-sense approach to resolving many of the long-festering problems that have confounded consumers and Congress alike. In addition, the Committee will work to expand Medicare to include a strong prescription drug benefit.

In the months ahead, the Committee will continue to work hard to improve the quality of health care; ensure that more American consumers have access to ground-breaking technologies and services; and see to it that we have the energy to fuel our nation's economy in the 21st century.

